

Sunday Celebration (December 6, 2009)

"Honoring God Through Giving"

"Road Not Taken"

"Jesus Christ said more about money than about any other single thing because, when it comes to a man's real nature, money is of first importance. Money is an exact index to a man's true character. All through Scripture there is an intimate correlation between the development of a man's character and how he handles his money." Richard Halverson (quoted in "Money, Possessions, & Eternity", p.15)

3 Scriptural Examples of Giving (in Each One We'll Consider 2 Things):

1. God's Perspective ...The Will & Word of God
2. Man's Perspective ...The Faith & Actions of the People; their Life Circumstances

Jacob's Tithe in Genesis...Gen 28:10-22

1. The Will & Word of God

- **The Revelation of a "TITHE".** "Tithe" = "tenth" and it describes the practice of giving to God 1/10 of the provision & blessing that comes into our lives. It's tied to our receiving, whenever we receive we return 10% to God as an expression of HONOR & WORSHIP to the one who is the source. It is both an UNDERSTOOD PATTERN and an INSTITUTED PATTERN:

Lev 27:30 Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD.

"In making the Lord his God and offering tithes, Jacob is imitating the actions of his grandfather Abraham. He is also, as father of the nation, setting a pattern for all Israel to follow." Gordon Wenham, "Genesis", WBC, p. 225

- **Abraham's Offering to Melchizedek** (Gen 14:20)
- **The Continued Practice Revealed in the Law Given through Moses**
Num 18:21 "To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting,
- **The Revelation of First Increase & Source of Provision**
Prov 3:9-10 "Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce;"

2. The Faith & Actions of Jacob

- **He is fleeing for his life** (Esau's Threats). He has departed from his family home and familiar surroundings unto a journey that would take over 20 years before his return.
- **This "Principle" accompanies Jacob's First Personal Encounter with God**
- **Jacob's Eagerness to Give is Birthed by His Revelation of the Goodness & Worth of God**
 - The revelation of MINISTERING ANGELS
 - The promise of OFFSPRING and LAND
 - The promise of GOD'S PRESENCE & PROTECTION
- **The tithe is Jacob's response to the grace of God...**not an attempt to purchase God's favor.

"Fellow believers, this is all grace. Jacob, the conniving believer who was outcast and alone due to his own sin, who merited nothing from God, was met by God in his misery with an unparalleled revelation of God's care and assurance for the future. Jacob was not seeking God—he was fleeing the consequences of his deception. He was not expecting grace. But grace was unleashed upon his soul." Kent Hughes, "Genesis", p. 360

- **Jacob makes his determination (pledge) in the light of God's Promise**
- **One day Jacob isn't tithing... the next moment he is** This should give us faith to do something different in this area of our lives.

Malachi ... Mal 3:6-12

1. The Will & Word of God

- Tithing was an Understood Expectation for God's People
- To not Tithe was to Sin Against God
- God has the Intention to Reward Us in Response to our Faith in Him (v. 10-11)

Prov 3:9-10 Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; 10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

- God Issues a "FULL" Challenge – The answer they needed was to have their faith challenged to bring the full tithe to God

Do Our Actions of Faith Say Something BIG about God?

2. The Faith & Actions of the People

- The People Have Grown Negligent & Unaware
 - Their Unawareness Didn't Release them from their Sin ("You are robbing me")
 - "Where Your Treasure is There Will Your Heart Be Also" God is having to call for his people to "RETURN" to him for their Hearts Had Drifted! ... If you let your Treasure (\$) drift from God, your Heart will soon follow.

God does not want our money. He wants us. Yet, we cannot give ourselves to him apart from our money." Kent Hughes, "Mark", vol 2, p. 133

- Their Faith for Provision & a Good Life was NOT Connected with God ... they had placed their faith in what Money Could Do to make them happy
- Their Neglect of This Practice had created some kind of "cursed" condition

The Widow's Mite ... Mk 12:41-44

1. The Will & Word of God

- **God is Watching How We Give** (how we WORSHIP) ... He's looking to see whose Faith is Making a BIG Statement about God
- **God is not Thrilled by Faithless Giving** ... even though some could claim they were giving, their giving was "SAFE" and didn't require FAITH
- **Your Little Offering is a BIG Deal to God** ... Those who don't have much income, but give in faith make the kind of contribution God takes notice of!

2. The Faith & Actions of the People

- **The Harsh Reality for a Widow in that day**
- **Some people expressed very little faith, even though they were giving something** ...this means that more than our money is involved in our offering
- **The widow's lack was not a cause for not giving**—it was an opportunity for Great Faith

Tithes & Offerings are about HONORING GOD ... Mal 1:6-14

"perhaps we can reverently ask why God cared so much about whether the sacrifices brought to him were unblemished or not. What's going on here? In part, God was interested in the priorities of the Israelites' lives. He wanted to know whether they were willing to bring God their best." Mark Dever, "Promises Made", p. 936

When It's All Said & Done ...

Am I giving to God in a way that HONORS HIM?